



Strategic Plan

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation



Message from the Director

This plan provides a broad vision for the Alaska Division of Wildlife Conservation that will help guide it over the next decade. Wildlife is a public resource, and the public has a great interest in how the division manages its wildlife. This plan has been developed with input from the public, as well as division staff. We appreciate everyone's contribution.

The division has had a successful program of wildlife management since statehood. Historically, our emphasis has primarily been on managing big game and other wildlife for consumptive uses. This will remain a core function of the division. In recent years, interest in nongame wildlife and in wildlife-related education and viewing has increased throughout our state and nation. This plan recognizes the need for the division to increase programs related to wildlife viewing and education, as well as managing wildlife that is not commonly hunted or trapped (nongame). Congress, too, has recognized the importance of these activities and has begun to provide funding for such programs.

As we expand and create new programs in wildlife education, wildlife viewing, and nongame management, we will simultaneously look for ways to enhance our efforts to manage wildlife for hunting and trapping. These activities are a mainstay of our Alaskan culture, are important public uses, and contribute significantly to financing wildlife management in Alaska. At the same time, with new federal funding, we now have the opportunity to better implement the department's mission, while broadening the scope of the division and making it a full-service wildlife management agency. This plan provides direction for future efforts in both our traditional and newly expanded programs.

As leadership in the department and division changes, new priorities will emerge and new directions will be set. This strategic plan has the flexibility to accommodate such changes, and will remain open to revision and improvement as new issues and ideas arise. This plan is another effort to actively engage and more fully involve the public in managing Alaska's wildlife. The division welcomes and looks forward to continued public involvement and cooperation in managing and conserving Alaska's valued wildlife resources.



Wayne Regelin, Director

December 4, 2002

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Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Moose are one of Alaska's largest big game animals. Bulls spar for dominance during the fall mating season, or "rut." Dominant bulls get more opportunities to breed cows.

Forward

The Division of Wildlife Conservation is one of six divisions in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and is responsible for managing all animals in Alaska, except waterfowl and marine mammals. Following its inception in 1957, the division went through two name changes before arriving at its current name in 1989. The division employs about 275 staff, located in a headquarters office in Juneau and in 22 regional and area offices located across the state. In fiscal year 2003, the division's budget totaled nearly \$28 million, with funding coming primarily from the state Fish and Game Fund, the federal Pittman-Robertson program, the federal State Wildlife Grants program, and federal Special Projects funds.

The first part of this plan describes the division's vision, mission, goals, and guiding philosophy, along with its functions, activities, and services. The second part of the plan identifies directions and strategies the division plans to pursue in the coming years to address a number of existing or anticipated issues associated with wildlife management and conservation in Alaska. Issues include challenges associated with obtaining necessary information about the status and trends of wildlife populations; providing the public with a variety of wildlife uses and benefits; regulatory processes, including dual management; human-wildlife conflicts; land use practices; and the recruitment and retention of division staff. The plan also provides direction for providing public involvement in wildlife management decisions.

For more information about this plan, contact:

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Alaska Department of Fish & Game

The Alaska Department of Fisheries was created in 1949 and was broadened in 1957 to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Today, the department is comprised of the Office of the Commissioner and six divisions: Administration, Commercial Fisheries, Habitat and Restoration, Sport Fish, Subsistence, and Wildlife Conservation. The department is led by a commissioner and has about 1,300 employees. A director leads each division.

Mission:

The mission of the department, prescribed by the Constitution and Statutes of the State of Alaska, is to manage, protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of Alaska. The primary goals are to ensure that Alaska's renewable fish and wildlife resources and their habitats are conserved and managed on the sustained yield principle, and the use and development of these resources are in the best interest of the economy and well-being of the people of the state.

Guiding Principles: (adopted in 1996)

Seeking excellence in carrying out its responsibilities under state and federal law, the department will:

1. Provide for the greatest long-term opportunities for people to use and enjoy Alaska's fish, wildlife, and habitat resources.
2. Improve public accessibility to, and encourage active involvement by the public in, the department's decision-making processes.
3. Build a working environment based on mutual trust and respect between the department and the public, and among department staff.

4. Maintain the highest standards of scientific integrity and provide the most accurate and current information possible.
5. Foster professionalism in department staff, promote innovative and creative resource management, and provide ongoing training and education for career development.



Photo courtesy of Peter Thurston

Division of Wildlife Conservation

The Division of Fur and Game was established in 1957 and was changed a year later to the Game Division; one of three original divisions of the department. The name was changed to the Division of Wildlife Conservation in 1989 to reflect the division's broadening mission.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation consists of the headquarters office in Juneau, and four regional offices located in Douglas, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Nome. There are also 22 area offices located throughout the state, giving the division a strong presence in rural Alaska. The division has about 275 employees. Of these, 6% are in leadership or managerial positions, 19% are in administrative positions, 49% are biologists, 15% are wildlife technicians, 8% are involved in biometrics, 2% are planners, and 1% serve as publications specialists.

Staff in regional and area offices are responsible for most of the wildlife research and management activities within their respective regions. Additionally, there are four statewide programs: Waterfowl Management, Marine Mammal Research, Information Management, and Hunter Information and Training.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, the division initiated

a participatory model for including staff in problem-solving and decision-making processes. During the past several years, teams and task forces made up of division staff have been created to address specific issues. Among these is the PEER Group, a cross section of division staff (genders, jobs, and duty stations) created to address internal issues and concerns. This group has recommended solutions to problems and provided them to the division's leadership, the Division Management Team (DMT). The DMT, which consists of the director and nine other upper-level managers, was created to provide broader involvement in policy and organizational decision-making efforts. The division intends to continue using the DMT, as well as staff teams and task forces, to address future issues and concerns.

Division Budget

The division operates primarily with state and federal funds and, to a lesser extent, with special projects funds. State funding sources consist primarily of the Fish and Game Fund and a small amount of General Funds. Federal funds are provided through the Federal

Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration and the State Wildlife Grants programs. The division's budget, from all sources, totaled just under \$28 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003).

State Fish and Game Fund: This fund includes revenues from the sale of hunting and trapping licenses; the sale of big game tags and waterfowl conservation stamps; drawing hunt application fees; McNeil River access permit application fees; income from the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range, and special donations. By statute, these funds may only be used for wildlife management activities. Resident users contribute about 25% of the annual revenue to the Fish and Game Fund, while non-resident users contribute about 75%. The division received authority to spend about \$10.6 million during FY03 from the fund. Based on past records and trends, the division expects to receive about the same level of funding from this source in the next five years.

Federal Pittman-Robertson Fund: This fund is derived from a 10-11% federal excise tax on the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. The

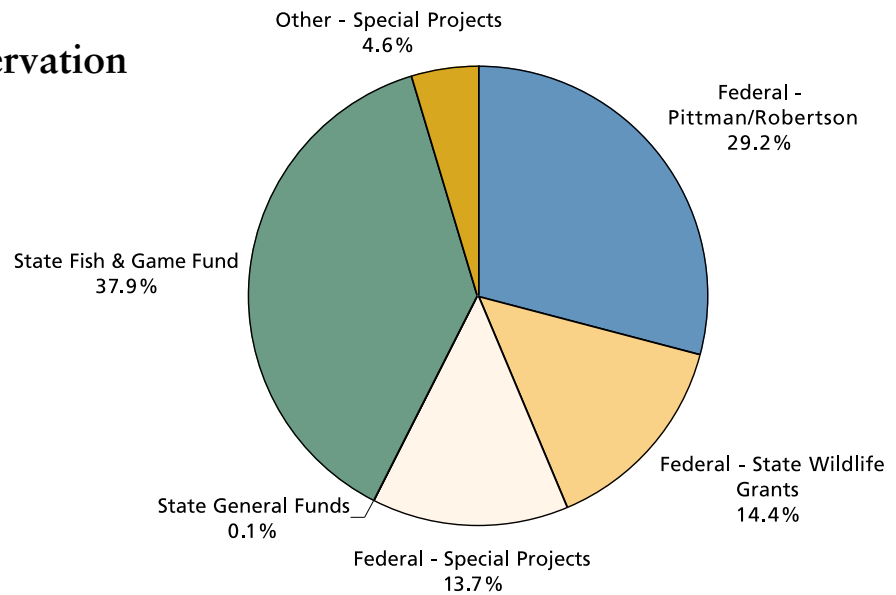


Photo courtesy of Todd Rinaldi

A tranquilized moose is fitted with a radio collar. Biologists will track the moose's movements and will gain other information about moose population levels and trends.

Division of Wildlife Conservation

Funding Sources Fiscal Year 2003



fund was established by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 and is administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Alaska annually receives the maximum allowed apportionment (5%) of the total national income to this account, and the division must match these federal funds with one dollar for every three federal dollars received. For the most part, the division uses these funds to conduct game management and research activities and to manage and administer activities associated with hunting and trapping. In FY03, the division received \$8.1 million from this source and, based on past records and trends, anticipates receiving slightly more from this source over the next five years.

State Wildlife Grants: This federal funding source was originally created by Congress in 2001 as the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, but was changed to the State Wildlife Grants Program in 2002. Funds for this program are appropriated by Congress to states for use in addressing conservation needs and concerns of species for which funding has not generally been available. Funds from this source may also be used for educational efforts associated with wildlife conservation. The division must match these federal funds with one dollar for every three federal dollars received, or, in some cases, with one dollar for every federal dollar received. In FY03, the division received \$4 million from this source. Passage of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) legislation could result in more than a tripling of funds

available from this source. Barring this, the projection is for the division to receive about the same level of funding from this source over the next five years.

Special Projects Funds: This source of funds comes from other agencies and non-government organizations through cooperative agreements and contracts. These funds are most often used for research or survey-inventory work conducted by division biologists and funded by other agencies, such as marine mammals research funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service. In FY03, the division received about \$5.1 million in special projects funds. This funding source is variable and uncertain, but is projected to increase slightly over the next five years.

State General Fund: Among other sources, funds for this account come from taxes and royalties on oil, commercial fisheries, coal, and other natural resources; from the sale of state land, timber, and other state-owned resources; and excise taxes on tobacco, liquor, and other goods. In 1986, the division received over \$3 million of general fund money, most of which went to support wildlife education, conservation, and nongame programs. Since then the legislature has moved to reduce state spending each year. The division's share of the General Fund has fallen to \$32,300 in FY03. The division will work within the administration to increase funding from this revenue source.

Why a Strategic Plan?

“We should be leading where we want to go, instead of reacting to where we are.”

—Dale Haggstrom, Division Biologist

Wildlife is an integral and important part of Alaska’s culture and landscape, and Alaskans and other citizens have long held a deep interest in how the state’s species are managed and conserved. Public interests include a variety of uses of wildlife, including hunting, trapping, viewing, and photography. While these uses are not incompatible, the Division of Wildlife Conservation is increasingly faced with public demands for more or improved wildlife-related opportunities for all of these uses. In response to these interests and demands, we are looking at new and varied opportunities and responsibilities for serving the public and determining practical and responsible approaches for doing so. This includes expanding and enhancing existing programs as well as developing new ones.

A strategic plan is a useful tool that affords us an

opportunity to think more broadly and strategically about issues we are likely to face in the future, and to develop practical and responsible approaches for dealing with them. It also provides us with a means to involve the public in sharing thoughts and perspectives to define and develop the best approaches possible. This plan provides the broad guidance to

move the division forward into the future.

We developed the plan over a period of about 18 months and periodically involved division staff and the public. Staff work teams identified issues and suggested new or continuing directions and strategies in existing management and research, public service, education and information, nongame management and research, and wildlife viewing. We obtained public input through meetings with a broad range of groups and interests, where participants discussed and evaluated staff ideas and added new thoughts

and perspectives of their own. This input was incorporated into a draft plan that was widely distributed to the public for review and further comment. Input received on the draft has been incorporated into this strategic plan.



Photo courtesy of Todd Rinaldi

“Public interests include a variety of uses of wildlife, including hunting, trapping, viewing, and photography”